

# ILLUSTRATED TIMES

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## THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF EUROPE.

"In fifty years Europe will be either Republican or Cossack!" So prophesied the first Napoleon upwards of half a century ago; but, though the period he specified has consequently more than elapsed, there are few signs of the fulfilment of the prophecy. Indeed, Europe, in the mass, is very much the same now as it was then; though in detail great and important changes have occurred. Europe was monarchical and aristocratic when the greatest of the Bonapartes uttered his prophecy; she is mainly monarchical and aristocratic still, with, however, very considerable modifications of the monarchies and aristocracies. Efforts to render Europe Republican have been made, but they have failed; and it is yet doubtful if the effort now in progress to establish a Republic in France will be more permanently successful than its precursors. Should it succeed, however—and for our part we devoutly hope it may—the fact of France being really Republican would most probably mark the beginning of the end; other nations would in all likelihood follow the example—in time. But till the beginning has positively been made, we see small prospect of the completion of the Republicanising process. As to the Cossack branch of the prophecy, that, happily, seems further from accomplishment than ever. Ambitious statesmen in St. Petersburg may have dreamt dreams of such a consummation; but even the most enthusiastic of Russians must by this time have abandoned all hope of seeing their aspirations realised. Whatever other results may flow from German unity, a united and powerful Germany places an effectual bar against Russian progress westward. Not that we think Russia likely to play an insignificant part in European politics; far from it;

but her field, henceforth, must necessarily lie mainly in the East.

While, however, one sees no probability of Europe becoming Cossack, and not much hope, perhaps, of her becoming Republican, it seems tolerably plain that very great changes in the relative positions of European States are impending: not immediately, perhaps, but not the less surely. The combining, confederating, and uniting of kindred peoples now going on mean something; and this agglomerating process in one direction must initiate and stimulate it in others. It is worth while indulging in a little speculation as to what may possibly come of all this.

To begin with, we suspect that the days of Turkish rule in Europe are numbered. That rule was an anomaly even when the Turks were vigorous and strong, and the subject races either effeminate or weak; it is a still greater anomaly now, when the positions of rulers and ruled are becoming every day more thoroughly reversed: when the Turk is waxing weaker and weaker, and the subject Christian races stronger and stronger. Serbia is already practically independent; Roumania is nearly so, and longs for complete emancipation; Roumelia, Bulgaria, Bosnia, and other provinces would gladly rid themselves of Mohammedan sway. In fact, the Porte holds his dominions in Europe by a very slight tenure; and the question here is not whether he shall continue to rule, but who shall succeed him. To this destiny it is generally believed that Russia aspires; and to baulk that aspiration the policy of European statesmen should be to encourage the development of the Christian populations of Turkey in Europe, so that when the apparently inevitable

collapse of Turkish domination shall occur there may be others than Muscovites to take its place. The Christian races who acknowledge the Sultan as their suzerain have of late years made vast progress in numbers, in influence, in wealth, and in political capacity; and they now—or very soon will—furnish materials for a confederation sufficiently strong to check the encroachments even of the Northern Colossus. That, we fancy, is one of the most desirable, if not the most probable, combinations in the political future of Europe. Its possibility depends upon whether or not the Turk can be maintained in his place till his natural and proper heirs are ready to take up their inheritance. They are, perhaps, not quite ready yet, but they soon may be; time only is required; and to afford time is the chief, if not the sole, reason why Europe should care to keep the "Sick Man" alive.

In the next place, German unity, as it seems to us, bodes no good to Austria, whatever professions of friendship Count Bismarck may make. The House of Hapsburg reigns over a very heterogeneous empire. Part is German, part is Slavonic, part is Asiatic (in descent, that is), and part (but only a small part now) is Latin. There are here grave elements of discord, if not of dissolution; elements likely to be made still more grave by the erection of a second, and perhaps more legitimate, German empire. We doubt if there will long be found room for two Kaisers bearing rule in the Fatherland. The German Austrians are likely, sooner or later, to be absorbed in the new German empire, either by the force of natural attraction or by those bonds of "blood and iron" which Count Bismarck knows so well how to fabricate and apply. Then the Slaves will as surely gravi-



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